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APPLICATION NO.	FILING DATE	FIRST NAMED INVENTOR	ATTORNEY DOCKET NO.	CONFIRMATION NO.
09/870,021	05/31/2001	Hideyuki Ando	1083.1080	8425

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EXAMINER

TARAE, CATHERINE MICHELLE

ART UNIT	PAPER NUMBER
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3623

DATE MAILED: 09/29/2006

Please find below and/or attached an Office communication concerning this application or proceeding.

Office Action Summary

Application No.

09/870,021

Applicant(s)

ANDO ET AL.

Examiner

C. Michelle Tarae

Art Unit

3623

-- The MAILING DATE of this communication appears on the cover sheet with the correspondence address --

Period for Reply

A SHORTENED STATUTORY PERIOD FOR REPLY IS SET TO EXPIRE 3 MONTH(S) OR THIRTY (30) DAYS, WHICHEVER IS LONGER, FROM THE MAILING DATE OF THIS COMMUNICATION.

- Extensions of time may be available under the provisions of 37 CFR 1.136(a). In no event, however, may a reply be timely filed after SIX (6) MONTHS from the mailing date of this communication.
- If NO period for reply is specified above, the maximum statutory period will apply and will expire SIX (6) MONTHS from the mailing date of this communication.
- Failure to reply within the set or extended period for reply will, by statute, cause the application to become ABANDONED (35 U.S.C. § 133). Any reply received by the Office later than three months after the mailing date of this communication, even if timely filed, may reduce any earned patent term adjustment. See 37 CFR 1.704(b).

Status

- 1) ☒ Responsive to communication(s) filed on 24 July 2006.
- 2a) ☐ This action is **FINAL**. 2b) ☒ This action is non-final.
- 3) ☐ Since this application is in condition for allowance except for formal matters, prosecution as to the merits is closed in accordance with the practice under *Ex parte Quayle*, 1935 C.D. 11, 453 O.G. 213.

Disposition of Claims

- 4) ☒ Claim(s) 3-7 and 10-18 is/are pending in the application.
- 4a) Of the above claim(s) _____ is/are withdrawn from consideration.
- 5) ☐ Claim(s) _____ is/are allowed.
- 6) ☒ Claim(s) 3-7 and 10-18 is/are rejected.
- 7) ☐ Claim(s) _____ is/are objected to.
- 8) ☐ Claim(s) _____ are subject to restriction and/or election requirement.

Application Papers

- 9) ☐ The specification is objected to by the Examiner.
- 10) ☐ The drawing(s) filed on _____ is/are: a) ☐ accepted or b) ☐ objected to by the Examiner.
Applicant may not request that any objection to the drawing(s) be held in abeyance. See 37 CFR 1.85(a).
Replacement drawing sheet(s) including the correction is required if the drawing(s) is objected to. See 37 CFR 1.121(d).
- 11) ☐ The oath or declaration is objected to by the Examiner. Note the attached Office Action or form PTO-152.

Priority under 35 U.S.C. § 119

- 12) ☒ Acknowledgment is made of a claim for foreign priority under 35 U.S.C. § 119(a)-(d) or (f).
- a) ☒ All b) ☐ Some * c) ☐ None of:
1. ☒ Certified copies of the priority documents have been received.
 2. ☐ Certified copies of the priority documents have been received in Application No. _____.
 3. ☐ Copies of the certified copies of the priority documents have been received in this National Stage application from the International Bureau (PCT Rule 17.2(a)).

* See the attached detailed Office action for a list of the certified copies not received.

Attachment(s)

- | | |
|--|---|
| 1) <input type="checkbox"/> Notice of References Cited (PTO-892) | 4) <input type="checkbox"/> Interview Summary (PTO-413)
Paper No(s)/Mail Date. _____ |
| 2) <input type="checkbox"/> Notice of Draftsperson's Patent Drawing Review (PTO-948) | 5) <input type="checkbox"/> Notice of Informal Patent Application |
| 3) <input type="checkbox"/> Information Disclosure Statement(s) (PTO/SB/08)
Paper No(s)/Mail Date _____ | 6) <input type="checkbox"/> Other: _____ |

DETAILED ACTION

1. A request for continued examination under 37 CFR 1.114, including the fee set forth in 37 CFR 1.17(e), was filed in this application after final rejection. Since this application is eligible for continued examination under 37 CFR 1.114, and the fee set forth in 37 CFR 1.17(e) has been timely paid, the finality of the previous Office action has been withdrawn pursuant to 37 CFR 1.114. Applicant's submission filed on July 24, 2006 has been entered.
2. Claims 3-4, 10-11, 13 and 16-18 have been amended. Claims 3-7 and 10-18 are now pending in this application.

Claim Rejections - 35 USC § 112

3. The following is a quotation of the second paragraph of 35 U.S.C. 112:

The specification shall conclude with one or more claims particularly pointing out and distinctly claiming the subject matter which the applicant regards as his invention.

4. Claims 3-7 and 10-18 are rejected under 35 U.S.C. 112, second paragraph, as being indefinite for failing to particularly point out and distinctly claim the subject matter which applicant regards as the invention.

As per claims 3-7 and 10-14, both the method claims and the system claims recite the same limitations in their bodies. Since method claims should be concerned with the steps to perform a process and system claims should be concerned with components and the functions those components perform, the scope of the claims are unclear since there is no distinguishment between the bodies of the method and system claims. Examiner notes that a system cannot be comprised of only software, which

constitutes software *per se*. Software *per se* is considered nonstatutory. However, a system may be comprised of hardware or a combination of hardware and software.

See MPEP § 2106 Section IV B 1 (a).

Additionally, the last two limitations of independent system claims 10, 11 and 13 are not in proper system claim form (i.e., a component listed first with the functions it performs following), as comprehensive evaluations and sales volume and market share cannot be system components, thereby further making the claims unclear.

Examiner suggests amending the steps of the method claims to positively recite the actions being performed and amending the system claims to explicitly recite the components of the system with the functions they perform. For example, in the first limitation of claim 3, something to the effect of “numerically evaluating a plurality of past products and said new product...” would help to distinguish from the first limitation in claim 10, which should recite something to the effect of “an evaluation unit *for* taking input data....”

As per claims 11-14 and 16-18, the system claims and the computer readable recording medium claims both positively recite the neural network as performing a calculation. Thus, that both the system claims and the computer readable recording medium claims have the same recitation for the neural network, makes it unclear if the neural network is a hardware component of a system or a software component of a computer readable recording medium.

Claim Rejections - 35 USC § 101

5. 35 U.S.C. 101 reads as follows:

Whoever invents or discovers any new and useful process, machine, manufacture, or composition of matter, or any new and useful improvement thereof, may obtain a patent therefor, subject to the conditions and requirements of this title.

6. Claims 10-14 are rejected under 35 U.S.C. 101 because the claimed invention is directed to non-statutory subject matter. Claims 10-14 are rejected as being directed toward non-statutory subject matter because the system claims appear to be software per se. Based on the reasons provided above in the 35 U.S.C. 112, second paragraph analyses and also on the lack of clarity in the specification for a description of the hardware (or hardware *and* software) components of the system claims, it appears that the system claims may be software per se. For example, based on the description in the specification, it appears that the evaluation unit may just be a software module and not a hardware component. Likewise, as discussed above, in the 35 U.S.C. 112, second paragraph rejection, it appears that the structured neural network may be a software module. Software per se is considered nonstatutory subject matter. See MPEP § 2106 Section IV B 1 (a).

Conclusion

7. Any inquiry concerning this communication or earlier communications from the examiner should be directed to C. Michelle Tarae (formerly, C. Michelle Colon) whose telephone number is 571-272-6727. The examiner can normally be reached Monday – Friday from 8:30am to 5:30pm.

If attempts to reach the examiner by telephone are unsuccessful, the examiner's supervisor, Tariq Hafiz, can be reached at 571-272-6729.

Information regarding the status of an application may be obtained from the Patent Application Information Retrieval (PAIR) system. Status information for published applications may be obtained from either Private PAIR or Public PAIR. Status information for unpublished applications is available through Private PAIR only. For more information about the PAIR system, see <http://pair-direct.uspto.gov>. Should you have questions on access to the Private PAIR system, contact the Electronic Business Center (EBC) at 866-217-9197 (toll-free).



C. Michelle Tarae
Patent Examiner
Art Unit 3623

September 21, 2006